

**Condemn and resist the escalation of
US armed intervention in the Philippines**

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Unsatisfied with the present scale and progress of its military operations in the Philippines—which it has now named "Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines", the US is now insisting on pouring in additional troops into the country—more than the limit set by the Balikatan 02-1 Terms of Agreement (ToR).

From the very start, the US had wanted to deploy as many of its troops to the Philippines as its triad operations (intelligence-community influence-combat) against the Abu Sayyaf would require and thus had reservations about the ToR's limiting the number of US troops here to 660.

The augmentation of US troops can only mean an immediate acceleration of US armed intervention in the country and portends greater ensuing escalations. Actually it is in line with the US plan to maintain a permanent presence in the Philippines and part of its bigger plan to wage war directly against the revolutionary forces, particularly the NPA and the MILF.

Part of preparations towards this is the propaganda hype and psywar campaign to depict both the NPA and MILF as terrorists and criminals, including the inclusion of the NPA in the US' list of terrorists, concocted stories about "continuing purges" within the NPA, the SOCOM's "confirmation" of the MILF's links with the al Qaida, their supposed involvement in *kidnap-for-ransom* crimes and other sorts of smear jobs. Such black propaganda is orchestrated by US psywar experts to taint the integrity of the revolutionary forces.

The "civic action" part of their triad operations in Basilan is being used as cover for the additional US troops. This is also needed in order to allure the local populace by means of show-case "do gooders". More than this, military operations have to be beefed up with additional US troops in order to cover the wider lair and area of operations of the Abu Sayyaf. The US finds the headway so far of combined USAF-AFP military operations against the Abu Sayyaf too slow and wanting and accordingly wants

to bring in an additional battalion of US troops to extinguish the 50-100 Abu Sayyaf forces.

Macapagal-Arroyo cannot conceal her utter puppetry in pretending that the plan has not yet reached her although she is "open to the request" and "sees nothing wrong with it". Actually, the US and Philippine government and armed forces had already reached an agreement on this matter. They are in fact only preparing the legal justifications. To get around the limit set by the ToR, a plan for an amendment to the Balikatan 02-1 ToR is already in the works.

At the same time, in the wake of the recently-concluded Balance Piston war exercise, another short-term Balikatan 02-2 with a much bigger number of participating US troops (1,700), will also be staged in Central Luzon from April to May. Accordingly there will be no need for a ToR for Balikatan 02-1 as this will be more of an exercise in contrast to the operations nature of Balikatan 02-1. The increasing and wide-spreading presence of US troops in the country is now being made into a normal, everyday affair.

The patriotic forces and Filipino people should all the more protest the US armed intervention in the country, resist its escalation, denounce the worsening treachery of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime and demand that the US troops be sent home.